

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5704

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL BELIZE IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 16038

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, UK, GT, BH, UN

SUBJECT: BELIZE DISPUTE: HMG REACTION TO AMBASSADOR
MELOY'S CONVERSATION WITH GUATEMALAN PRESIDENT

REF: (A) GUATEMALA 5673; (B) STATE 246825

SUMMARY - EMBOFFS MET WITH FCO OFFICIALS OCTOBER 17 TO APPRISE HMG OF REF A SUBSTANCE. FCO EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER GUATEMALAN INTERPRETATION OF FONSEC CALLAGHAN'S REMARKS DURING MEETING WITH FON MIN MOLINA, AND DENIED HE HAD SAID OR IMPLIED INDEPENDENCE WAS IMMINENT. THEY SUGGESTED GOG MAY HAVE DELIBERATELY MISINTERPRETED FONSEC'S REMARKS TO BUILD CASE FOR MILITARY ACTION, SHOULD SUCH IN GUATEMALAN VIEW BECOME NECESSARY. THEY EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR INFORMATION. INCLUDING AMBASSADOR MELOY'S ASSESSMENT OF GUATEMALAN MOOD, WILL REITERATE INSTRUCTIONS TO EMBASSY WASHINGTON TO REVIEW CALLAGHAN/MOLINA MEETING WITH DEPARTMENT, AND REAFFIRMED HMG'S DESIRE TO REACH PEACEFUL, NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WITH GUATEMALA. LATTER POINT, HOWEVER, SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS GIVING GOG ULTIMATE VETO OVER INDEPENDENCE FOR BELIZE. WHILE FCO REALIZES THAT INDEPENDENCE WITHOUT SOME KIND OF ACCOMMODATION WOULD LEAVE BELIZE WITH ONLY ILLUSION OF INDEPENDENCE, BELIZE MUST ULTIMATELY BECOME INDEPENDENT.

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EMBOFFS WERE SHOWN FCO MEMCON OF CALLAGHAN/MOLINA WHICH

SUBSTANTIATED FCO CLAIM THAT IMMINENT INDEPENDENCE WAS NEITHER STATED NOR IMPLIED. FROM TONE OF MEMCON, HOWEVER, WE CAN SEE HOW GUATEMALANS MIGHT HAVE BEEN OFFENDED. END SUMMARY.

1. BECAUSE OF AMBASSADOR'S PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS, UNAVAILABILITY OF FOREIGN SECRETARY, AND DESIRABILITY OF TIMELY ACTION, POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND EMBOFF CALLED OCTOBER 17 ON ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARY ROBERT EDMONDS AND WEST INDIAN DEPARTMENT HEAD PATRICK DUFF TO PASS ON SUBSTANCE OF REF A, PURSUANT TO DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS (REF B).

2. POLITICAL COUNSELOR REVIEWED SUBSTANCE OF PARAGRAPHS 1, 2, 3, AND 4 IN DETAIL, OMITTING GUATEMALAN DESCRIPTION OF CALLAGHAN'S BEHAVIOR, MENTIONED INACCURATE GUATEMALAN INTELLIGENCE ON BRITISH REINFORCEMENTS AND AMBASSADOR MELOY'S ATTEMPT TO SET RECORD STRAIGHT (PARAGRAPHS 5-7), AND QUOTED AMBASSADOR'S ASSESSMENT OF GOG MOOD (PARAGRAPH 11). FCO OFFICIALS EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY AMBASSADOR'S EFFORTS TO CALM GUATEMALAN FEARS AND U.S. EVALUATION OF GUATEMALAN MOOD. ADDRESSING "IMMINENT" INDEPENDENCE FOR BELIZE, THEY STATED CALLAGHAN HAD NOT USED SUCH A WORD NOR HAD HE WISHED TO CONVEY THAT THOUGHT. RATHER, HE WANTED GUATEMALANS TO UNDERSTAND THAT INDEPENDENCE "COULD NOT BE DELAYED FOREVER." THEY ALSO NOTED MEMCON HAD BEEN SENT TO WASHINGTON WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR EMBASSY TO REVIEW IT WITH DEPARTMENT, AND PROMISED TO FOLLOW UP WITH EMBASSY TO ENSURE DEPARTMENT IS MADE FULLY AWARE OF CONTENTS. REGARDING INDEPENDENCE PROCESS, THEY POINTED OUT THAT EVEN IF HMG DECIDED TO BEGIN PROCESS IMMEDIATELY (WHICH, EMPHATICALLY, IT HAS NOT DONE), PROCESS WOULD TAKE MINIMUM OF NINE MONTHS UNDER BEST CIRCUMSTANCES, WHICH CERTAINLY DO NOT APPLY IN CASE OF BELIZE. THEY ALSO REITERATED HMG'S DESIRE TO REACH PEACEFUL ACCOMMODATION WITH GOG. SALVADORAN FONMIN MAURICIO BORGONOVO, THEY SAID, HAD RECENTLY RELAYED THIS MESSAGE TO MOLINA AND OFFERED TO TRY TO ARRANGE FOR MOLINA TO MEET PRIVATELY WITH PREMIER PRICE OF BELIZE.

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3. DUFF THEN SPECULATED THAT GOG MAY HAVE DELIBERATELY MISINTERPRETED CALLAGHAN'S REMARKS TO BUILD SUPPORT WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES IN EVENT SITUATION REQUIRES THEM TO ACT MILITARILY. GOG, ACCORDINGLY, COULD ARGUE THAT HMG'S "IMMINENT" DECISION LEFT THEM NO PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO MILITARY ACTION. DUFF ACKNOWLEDGED NEED TO AVOID HUMILIATING GOG WHICH, HE NOTED, MIGHT PROVOKE MILITARY MOVE. IT IS POSSIBILITY OF SUCH ACTION, HE SAID,

THAT COULD FORCE HMG TO REINFORCE ITS FORCES IN BELIZE.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 201052Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5705

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL BELIZE IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

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IN SUCH A CASE USG WOULD BE GIVEN ADVANCE NOTICE AND DETAILS OF PROPOSED REINFORCEMENTS, AND HMG WOULD WELCOME USG ADVICE AS WHETHER AND HOW GOG SHOULD BE ADVISED. DUFF ALSO SUGGESTED THAT CALLAGHAN STATEMENTS MAY HAVE BEEN MISINTERPRETED IN EFFORT TO PREVENT UN RESOLUTION ON BELIZE WHICH GOG MIGHT FIND HUMILIATING.

4. REGARDING UN RESOLUTION, THEY EXPLAINED THAT HMG IS SEEKING TO "CONTROL" (LATER CHANGED TO "ADVISE") BELIZE AND COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN STATES TO ENSURE DRAFT RESOLUTION TAKES INTO ACCOUNT GUATEMALAN SENSIBILITIES. IT SHOULD STRESS IMPORTANCE OF SELF-DETERMINATION, BELIZE'S RIGHT TO INDEPENDENCE AND NEED FOR NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF DIFFERENCES WITH GUATEMALA. THEY BELIEVE INTERESTED PARTIES ARE BEING "ADVISED INTO LINE," BUT IF HMG'S ADVICE IS NOT HEEDDED, UK WILL SEEK DEFEAT OF RESOLUTION. THEY EXPECT DRAFT WILL BE AGREED UPON NEXT WEEK, OUT OF FOURTH COMMITTEE BY NOVEMBER 20, AND APPROVED BY UNGA DURING FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER. CRITICAL POINTS IN TERMS OF POSSIBLE GUATEMALAN REACTION, THEY BELIEVE, WILL OCCUR FOLLOWING FOURTH COMMITTEE AND UNGA VOTES.

5. EDMONDS THEN SUMMARIZED FCO RESPONSE AS FOLLOWS: (A) THEY GREATLY APPRECIATE OUR BRINGING GOG VIEWS TO THEIR ATTENTION; (B) WORD "IMMINENT" WAS NOT USED BY CALLAGHAN, SECRET

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NOR DID HE WISH TO IMPLY DECISION ON BELIZE'S INDEPENDENCE WAS ABOUT TO BE TAKEN; (C) HMG APPRECIATES AND TAKES NOTE OF AMBASSADOR'S ASSESSMENT OF GUATEMALAN MOOD; AND (D) HMG HAS AND WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP USG FULLY INFORMED OF ITS INTENTIONS AND ACTIONS REGARDING BELIZE. EDMONDS ALSO INQUIRED WHETHER AMBASSADOR MELOY HAD ADVISED HM'S CONSUL GENERAL IN GUATEMALA OF HIS MEETING (EMBOFFS ASSUMED SO IN VIEW OF OUR INSTRUCTIONS) AND SAID REPORT OF OUR MEETING WOULD BE SENT TO WASHINGTON, CONGEN IN GUATEMALA, GOVERNOR IN BELIZE AND UK UN MISSION.

6. FOLLOWING MEETING, DUFF ALLOWED EMBOFFS TO READ CALLAGHAN/MOLINA MEMCON. WHILE IT IS CLEAR THAT FONSEC DID NOT STATE OR WISH TO IMPLY INDEPENDENCE WAS IMMINENT, HIS REPETITION OF VIEW THAT GUATEMALA COULD NOT DELAY INDEPENDENCE INDEFINITELY MAY HAVE BEEN INTERPRETED IN THAT WAY. FROM MEMCON EMBOFFS COULD ALSO SEE HOW TONE OF CALLAGHAN'S COMMENTS MIGHT HAVE OFFENDED GUATEMALAN SENSIBILITIES.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INDEPENDENCE, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, SELFDETERMINATION, NEGOTIATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON16038
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750363-0389
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751038/aaaabhnp.tel
Line Count: 200
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 GUATEMALA 5673, 75 STATE 246825
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 JUN 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <06 NOV 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BELIZE DISPUTE: HMG REACTION TO AMBASSADOR MELOY'S CONVERSATION WITH GUATEMALAN PRESIDENT
TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, GT, BH, UK, UN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006